

[Mrs. Lula Bowers, I]

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Folklore

MRS. LULA BOWERS , I.

Mrs. Bowers is small and frail looking. Though very deaf, she talks entertainingly. Her memory of dates and events is very good.

In referring to the social life of the past, she said when visited, "We had parties in our day. We call 'em Sociables - Sociables and Surprise Parties. They met in the homes. I've been to a many a one! Played games, cards and danced. But the church members weren't allowed to dance. If church members dances, dance they'd turn 'em out. Didn't have any round-dances in that day. The girls would begin dancing by first dancing with their brothers and cousins. Then they'd dance with everybody. I was a great dancer. And my husband was a fiddler. My father wouldn't let me dance the round dances. He didn't care how much I danced the other dances. There was a young man come up from Savannah. He was a great dancer. He danced all the dances. Then my son-in-law danced all the dances. Dixie Box, Jimmy Box, Lillie Box, Nanny Box, and Frank Warren were the biggest dancers around Estill. May Lawton was a great dancer - and Anna Sloane.

"They'd have a big Quiltin' Party and dance! Didn't get much quiltin' out of 'em. They'd quilt all day and dance all night. I've been to a many a one! Natalie Johnston was a perfect belle among 'em. She was a great dancer. Dr. Cleveland Johnston, Coy Johnston, and Kruger Johnston were all great dancers. I had quilted out seven quilts when I married.

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My step-mother used 'em. They were the old time Nine-patch 2 and the Seven Sisters. I have some of 'em now. I have two quilts that were buried during the Confederate War. My mother made them in 1857. One is the Open Rose. The other is the Album quilt, with the names of friends on it. They're good now! The Open Rose was a great quilt; and the Rose and Bud. My mother-in-law gave me a quilt in 1878. I've got it now. It's still good. I remember the home-made blankets, too, made during the Confederate War. The wool was cut off my grandfather's sheep. My grandfather gave all his children negroes; and when the Confederate War come up he owned 75 - a big slave-owner.

"We had Spelling Bees in those days. I went to one up at Old Allendale near Martyn's Station. It was held at a Campbellite Church. I drove five in a buggy hitched to an old blind mule. That was September 1874. It was the first Campbellite Church I ever went to. Old Dr. Jim Erwin was the preacher. The poorest speller had to put a wreath on the hand of the best speller. Clarence Erwin was the best speller and Minnie Warren was the poorest. She crowned him with a wreath. Charlie Peeples knows all those people. He can tell you all about this. He and I danced many a dance together. My grandmother used to call it the frolicing church. They went to church and come back and danced till daylight. A fire in the woods burnt the church up. Not there now. Johnston Peeples' mother was the greatest dancer ever was in this country - Catty Johnston! After the war when they first began making cotton and selling it 3 for a good price, the husbands'd come in and ask the wives which they'd rather have - a silk frock, or a carpet to go on the floor. Some would want a silk frock, and some, a carpet. They didn't have anything in their houses after the war.

"We had Sewing Bees, too. I've been to a many a one! We'd sew all day and dance at night. My aunt would take me to 'em when I was a little child. They'd make clothes for the slaves. Make them out of homespun. My great-grand-mother had a loom, and they'd weave cloth on it. They'd give as a prize for the best sewer a bushel of potatoes, or some chickens, or something like that. And they'd have beer made out of persimmons, and beer made out of sweet potatoes. They'd have all that at them Sewings and Quiltings. They'd have inspectors to overlook the sewing to see who'd win the prize. Generally have

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three. If someone made the most garments but they weren't made the best, the judges would generally give the prize to the one that did the best sewing. But both counted. Had a regular button-hole worker. My old aunt worked the button-holes.

"I've seen the Yankees come and burn down the houses. I saw two large houses burned to the ground. When they came to our house, I went out and sat in the Captain's lap and begged him not to burn our house. I was six years old. I hugged and kissed him and begged him not to burn our house. My mother was a widow. They didn't burn it. They came through several times. They'd keep coming through for two or three months. After the 4 war we didn't have meat but once a day. Didn't have any meat for breakfast or supper. And flour was so scarce we didn't have biscuits but once a week. And then didn't have but one around - sometimes half a biscuit. I've had many a half-biscuit. I have a gold watch that my aunt had tied around her waist to keep the Yankees from getting it. My mother's grandmother give it to her. I'm saving it for my [grandmother.?] That'll be five or six generations.

"They'd have candy-pullings, too. They had a lot of sorghum molasses. But they didn't have any nice cane syrup. But they had a lot of syrup and they'd have candy pullings. They'd sometimes put peanuts in the candy; but you can't pull it when you put nuts in it. They had a lot of cows, and plenty of milk and butter.

"I'll tell you another great thing they done. Made lye soap. They'd pour it through the ashes.

"I'm eleven months younger than Charlie Peeples. He was eighty years old the 26th of February. He was born in 1858. I was born the 9th of January 1859."

Source: Mrs. Lula Bowers, Luray, S. C.